

Habitat Restoration in Juanita Bay Park

Major changes are coming to Juanita Bay Park in 2009! The City of Kirkland, with the help of Seattle Urban Nature (SUN) and EarthCorps, is embarking on a multi-year habitat restoration project focusing on improving wildlife habitat in the extensive wetland and forest complex at the park. The work will kick off on April 25th with an Earth Day volunteer event at which more than 100 people are expected. Volunteers will maintain previously restored areas near the parking lot and will clear additional sections of noxious weeds such as Himalayan blackberry.

Invasive and noxious species such as Himalayan blackberry are a large problem within the park. In 2008, SUN mapped habitats and locations of invasive plants on 48 acres in Juanita Bay Park. As a result of this process, SUN found 9 acres of blackberry, 14 acres of reed canarygrass, and 25 species of invasive trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. Using this information, SUN developed a Restoration Action Plan that identified restoration priorities and a menu of specific tasks along with planting plans and maintenance schedules necessary to implement these tasks. This action plan is available on their website at: <http://www.seattleurbannature.org/Resources/publications.html>.

This spring, the City of Kirkland hired EarthCorps to organize volunteer events in conjunction with trained crews to implement the projects identified in the Action Plan. EarthCorps crews will be working in a 1.2 acre area throughout this summer and fall, clearing blackberry along and adjacent to the eastern-most boardwalk/causeway (please see map). The eastern boardwalk/causeway is a major focal point in the park and one of the most popular walking routes. Currently, the entrance to the walkway from the park side is overgrown by Himalayan blackberry, which is also growing among the poplars that line the boardwalk. This project will remove Himalayan blackberry, English ivy, and Scot's broom (which are all classified as noxious weeds in King County) along the walkway, clear invasive species around the poplars, and extend restoration efforts into the meadow adjacent to this area.

In addition to the above efforts, five Stewards trained by the Washington Native Plant Society will adopt a half-acre area adjacent to the central boardwalk (please see map). The Native Plant Stewards will lead volunteer events and involve the community to clear Himalayan blackberry from the trail and wetland buffer.

In the fall, 40 different species of native plants and over 2,000 trees and shrubs will be planted in these areas with help from a volunteer event scheduled for October 17th, 2009. These native plants will replace Himalayan blackberry, which is listed as a noxious weed in King County, and will provide improved habitat to native and migrating birds and wildlife, as well as a beautiful view to park visitors. Next year, we hope to expand the restored area. Please check the kiosk near the park restrooms for additional information as restoration activities progress.

To learn more about the project or sign up for a volunteer event, please contact Sharon Rodman at: greenkirkland@ci.kirkland.wa.us or (425) 587-3305. For more information about the City's Green Kirkland Partnership program, please see www.greenkirkland.org.